

A Gravy Train With Biscuit Wheels

Adventures, Misadventures, and Pizza in the Rome/London/Paris of the Midwest: Cincinnati

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Friday, December 28, 2012

How to Judge a Great Pizza

Most people will rarely turn down a slice of pizza (this blog’s authors included). It truly is a super food that comes in many tasty styles. Pizza also happens to be one of the most innovative types on American cuisine right now. The easiest way to judge a pizza is simply your gut reaction of whether the pizza is good or not. That’s what a lot of my early reviews were like (ie. “The sauce was good. The crust was okay. The cheese was pretty good.”). My quick gut reaction is still largely the way I determine if I like a pizza, at least at first bite. Pizza is too complicated to be judged by a formula. But to keep you going back to a place, a pizzeria should fulfill a few more complex tastes. Here’s how I judge a great pizzeria:

- 1.) If you tear off a piece of the crust, is it worth eating on its own? Or is it simply a load bearing device to hold up the massive quantities of toppings (not necessarily a bad thing, but not usually seen in the best pizzerias)? Is the bread dense or more airy? Does the crust have a tasty uneven char, without being burnt? Are there some other flavors in the crust (salt, butter, sugar, cornmeal, garlic, herbs, or more exotic stuff)? The crust is usually half of the mass of the pizza, so it’s important to get it right.
- 2.) Do the individual toppings taste good on their own? Are they local or high quality? Would you eat them if they were served on an appetizer plate alone? Or do they need cheese, bread, and tomato sauce to work. What types of cheeses are being used? Would the cheese also taste okay on its own? Does it have much taste?
- 3.) Is there a lot of sauce, a sauce drought, or somewhere in-between? Is the sauce (even if canned) delicious on its own? Does it rely on salt or sugar for a strong taste?
- 4.) Is there any one part of the pizza that has a strong taste and dominates everything else? Blue cheese can perform this function (Again, not necessarily a bad thing depending on your tastes).
- 5.) When the pizza is taken together, does it taste delicious and balanced? Is there too much sauce or cheese? Is it too salty, sweet, or greasy? Do the different tastes complement each other well? All the ingredients could be great, but the pizza could just be too doughy. I find that with the best of any style pizza, you can tell that the chef has thought out and carefully crafted the whole pizza.
- 6.) Does the pizza remain tasty and interesting from start to finish? Or does the pizza have a great first bite, but then become an uninteresting trudge to finish eating. Over-salted pizzas can definitely fall into this trap.
- 7.) Value-wise, is the pizza worth it? The restaurant can have great locally-sourced ingredients with lovely stories about the hardscrabble farmers (and all that foodie stuff), a stone oven shipped in from Naples, but merely produce an above average pizza. If you’re charged \$25 for a 7/10 pizza, the pizzeria is doing something wrong. They are not fully utilizing their resources or living up to their potential. I enjoy a great artisan pizza, but also one of my favorite things is to see a really well made inexpensive pizza from a thoughtful owner.

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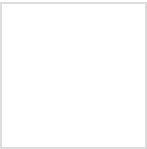


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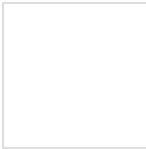
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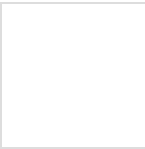
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20 Best Pizzas in Cincinnati



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My White Whale Beckons

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Posted by Joe at 12:26 PM



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26 minutes ago



The Food Hussy!



Restaurant Review: Elusive Cow - So I have a posse. Yeah - I'm cool like dat. This is my posse. Okay - it may not be much of a posse - but it's all mine. The far left Matt wanted

to gathe...
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Rachel Kushner: The Flamethrowers - *A young woman comes of age on a motoreyle* 1970s Art Scene in New York Italian Motorcycles, the downtown New York art scene of the 1970s, American yo...

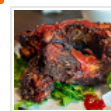
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wine me, dine me

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Huit BBQ: - One of the first things I noticed about Huit was the attention to detail--and I'm not just talking about the food. I'm talking about the space

itself. I...
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e The Sensitive Epicure
S'Mores Bars (gluten-free) - Please check out my new blog, *Swing Eats*. Look for more to come, hopefully with Swing Eats baked goods headed your way. They're "gluttonous and good fo...
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Over-the-Rhine Blog
Findlay After Five - OTR's revitalization is moving northward across Liberty Street, and Findlay Market is a big reason why. Enjoy Eli's BBQ (future Findlay Market tenant) and ...
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e The Rochester NY Pizza Blog
 A Revisit to Two Ton Tony's - One of the challenges of writing this blog is keeping up with developments in the local pizza scene while still returning to old favorites. One old favori...
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Market Urbanism
Planned Manufacturing Districts: Planning the Life Out of Districts - They are called different things in different cities, but they are similar in form and intent among the cities where they are found. For simplicity's sake...
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Scott's Pizza Journal
Pizza box art show in LONDON! 6 - 9 November at Old Truman... - Pizza box art show in LONDON! 6 - 9 November at Old Truman Brewery (7 Dray Walk, across from Rough Trade). Opening party (6 Nov, 6:30-9p) will have F...
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The Food Lab: How to Make the Best Kale Pizza - Kale turns crisp, sweet, and nutty when exposed to the high heat of a pizza-ready oven. In this white pie, we pair it with two cheeses (for a mix of more n...
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Kimchi and Pizza; a Match Made in Heaven! - Kimchi, the traditional condiment of Korea combined with cheese on a pizza or (as above), on a Turkish Pide? Yes, yes, yes I say. The textural crunch and...
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FB Pizza Quest with Peter Reinhart
Typo in new book, Yikes! - Hi Folks, An Amazon reviewer found a typo in one of the recipes, found on page 63. The water amount by weight is correct but the volume measurement shou...
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Tyler Cowen's Ethnic Dining Guide
Where to eat in Hong Kong - Anywhere near downtown virtually all of the good places are quite expensive. The good news is that there are many of them and they are quite fine

indeed. T...
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 **A Hamburger Today**
Mini Grilled Gyro Burgers With Tzatziki and Pickled Peperoncini - A gyro-spiced beef-and-lamb mixture is formed into little patties, grilled, and topped with tzatziki and pickled peperoncini for one tasty sandwich.
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“The lesson about food is that the most predictable and the most orderly outcomes are always not the best. They are just easier to describe. Fads are orderly. Food carts and fires aren't. Feeding the world could be a delicious mess, full of diverse flavors and sometimes good old-fashioned smoke.” — Tyler Cowen

